Ingrid's Back!



The Second Gnettlefield Journal
plus a complete guide for adventurers

Ingrid's Back

Contents

Credits

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Game programming and game text: Graham Jones.
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Transport to your Micro: Nick Austin and Mike Bryant.
Published by: Level 9, PO Box 39, Weston-super-Mare BS24 9UR.

Getting Started

If you have not played a Level 9 adventure before, please read all these instructions. If you are an experienced Level 9 adventurer, skip to the preface and just read that.

Boot the disc or load the first cassette to start the game. If you don't know how to do this, see the loading instructions on Page 10.

When the game prints "What gnow?" or ">", it is waiting for you to type a command. (The game also waits when it has more text to print than will fit on the screen at one time; read what's displayed and press either SHIFT or SPACE to continue).

This game knows four types of commands:

* Movement: just type the direction you want to go: NORTH, NORTHEAST, EAST (and the other compass directions), IN, OUT, UP, DOWN or ACROSS. GO or RUN take you to a named place, e.g GO TO INN, and FOLLOW is self-explanatory.

* Actions: e.g LOOK, TAKE THE PETITION, SIGN IT, DROP IT, EXAMINE THE CASK, WEAR THE HAT, DRINK THE CIDER, or GIVE CARROT TO BUMPY.

* System commands. EXITS, INVENTORY and SCORE give information; WORDS, PICTURES, BRIEF, VERBOSE, EXITS ON and EXITS OFF control what is output; UNDO; SAVE, RESTORE, RAM SAVE and RAM RESTORE save your position or return to an earlier position, and RESTART stops the game. See the example game, later, for more details.

* Commands to others. Ingrid could command a few people, such as Flopsy her dog, but most gnomes were wary of her talent for disaster and tried not to get involved. Type their name, followed by commands, e.g FLOPSY, GO NORTH, GET EVERYTHING, THEN FOLLOW ME.

You can abbreviate commands, e.g SOUTH to S and SOUTHEAST to SE, and even type several commands on one line, e.g EAST, TAKE ALL, WEST. After typing a command (or commands), press the ENTER or RETURN key.

Preface

"Gnome Ranger" told how Ingrid Bottomlow returned from the Institute of Gnome Economics, full of schemes to improve life, and succeeded in demolishing most of the family farm. "Accidentally" banished by her exasperated family, Ingrid had more success with putting the wilderness to rights, and even stopped a war or two.

"Ingrid's Back" starts with Ingrid's return to Little Moaning, and tells how she stopped the plans of Jasper Quickbuck, money-grabbing lord of Ridley's Manor, to steamroll the gnome-belt village for an estate of yuppie homes.

Ingrid Bottomlow's Second Gnettlefield Journal is an introduction. Then, part 1 of the game describes Ingrid's attempts to get her fellow gnomes to sign a petition against the planned eviction. The next part concerns the defence of Gnettlefield farm and finally, in part 3, Ingrid infiltrates the manor.

Clues for part 1:
* Only Flopsy trusts Ingrid.
* To get someone to sign, try e.g "give petition to Jumbo".
* Don't collect signatures from outsiders.

Clues for part 2:
* Noah has been known to lie down on the job, but follows instructions.
* Stop the steamroller, then trap the trolls.

Clue for part 3:
* Cousin Daisy may be of help.

If you are really stuck, you can get a comprehensive free cluesheet, with hundreds of clues, from Official Secrets (see Page 9), or direct from Level 9 at PO Box 39, Weston-super-Mare, Avon BS24 9UR England. You must enclose the "clue card" from the packaging and provide a large, stamped, self-addressed envelope (UK users), or four International reply coupons (overseas users).



Talking to the game

As you have seen, this game understands a lot of commands. The following list is only part of its vocabulary, but it gives an idea of what to try:
north, northeast, east (and other compass directions), up, down, in, out, cross, climb, go, run, follow, again, attack, inventory, quit, save, restore, ram save, ram restore, undo, score, wait, examine, look, take, drop, wear, throw, give, fill, empty, open, close, eat, drink, press, exits, words, pictures, brief, verbose.

Many words can be abbreviated, e.g "inventory" to "inv".

The following example is not from Ingrid's Back, but it illustrates how to play. The player's commands are in capitals, after each ">" or "What now?" prompt, and text in square brackets is comments...

Ingrid struggled from the rubble of Low Moan farm and brushed herself down. All gnew projects had little teething troubles, and fortunately the farmhouse had gneeded redecorating anyway.
Muffled shouts announced that Mrs Downtrodden was unharmed, just trapped in the cellar of her former home, so Ingrid cheerily called, "Don't worry! Trust me and I'll soon get you free".
There was a pause, then much louder shouting. But Ingrid had gnot waited to be thanked and was already away down the road.
> **LOOK**
Ingrid was standing near the top of Ploughgnomes' Lane, looking down towards the village of Little Moaning. She could see Flopsy.
Flopsy bounded around Ingrid, barking happily.
> **EXAMINE FLOPSY**
Flopsy was the Bottomlow's cart dog; a Yuletide present from Ingrid to her parents. They had wanted a gnice, quiet, small dog, but instead got this bouncy monster with flopping ears. However, Ingrid thought she was wonderful.
> **FLOPSY, FOLLOW ME**
Flopsy nodded and licked Ingrid's face.
> **UP**
Ingrid went uphill and reached the summit of Ploughgnomes' Hill. The lane continued northwards, past a stile on the west side. A rabbit scampered

across the road, pushed through the hedge beside the stile and hopped away quickly towards Darkwood.
Flopsy arrived from below.
> **FOLLOW RABBIT**
Ingrid tried to climb over the stile but found, gnot surprisingly, that it was too high. She shrugged, walked underneath and was in a scrubby field on the edge of a great forest. She could see a signpost. The rabbit's tail was just visible, vanishing west into the trees.
Flopsy entered from the east and barked excitedly.
Ingrid went west and was below the eaves of darkwood, in the middle of a bramble hedge. Ingrid could see a multitude of thorns.
Flopsy entered from the east, sniffed at a bramble, yelped and retreated out of sight.
Ingrid tried to go west but found she was trapped by the thorns and could not follow the rabbit any further.
> **UNDO** ["Take back move" - available on most micros.]
Ingrid was in a scrubby field on the edge of a great forest. She could see a signpost and Flopsy.
> **INVENTORY** [or "examine me"]
Ingrid owned a book and a petition.
Flopsy chased a butterfly into the distance.
> **EXITS**
Exits lead east, south and west.
> **EXAMINE SIGNPOST**
It said "General Store, prop Seamus Sosmall" and pointed south along a winding path. Ingrid thanked the signpost kindly.
> **BRIEF, WORDS, EXITS ON**
OK. OK. OK. [Locations will be described briefly, pictures turned off and exits reported automatically in future. To reverse these choices, you could use VERBOSE, PICTURES and EXITS OFF.]
> **S** [i.e "SOUTH"]
Ingrid went south and was just outside Seamus' shop. Exits lead gnorth and inside through a door. Ingrid could see a bell-pull.
> **GO INSIDE**
The door was closed.
Flopsy arrived from the gnorth.
> **RING BELL**
As Ingrid rang the bell, the door opened and slowly closed again.
Flopsy looked on with interest.

> **FLOPSY, WAIT AND HOLD DOOR**

Flopsy gnodded happily.

> **RING BELL**

As Ingrid rang the bell, the door opened. Flopsy held the door so that it could gnot close.

> **IN**

Ingrid walked inside and was in Seamus Sosmall's shop, surrounded by all kinds of peculiar objects. An exit led outside. Ingrid could see a flying pig, a three dollar bill, a postcard of cute little ice-skating demons, a tax refund, the philosopher's stone and an axe. Ingrid looked very suspiciously at the axe, and it looked very suspiciously back.

> **SCORE**

Ingrid scored 10 out of 1000.

> **EXITS OFF** [stop reporting exits]

OK. One of the little demons winked at Ingrid.

> **RAM SAVE**

OK. [Before doing anything with these strange objects, save the position in RAM - i.e in the computer's memory - in case Ingrid encounters difficulties and you want to return to this point, using RAM RESTORE. To save to disc or tape, use SAVE and RESTORE.]

> **GET ALL BUT THE PIG**

Three dollar bill: Ingrid took it.

Postcard of cute little ice-skating demons: it was pinned firmly to the wall.

Tax refund: Ingrid took it.

Philosopher's Stone: as Ingrid touched the Philosopher's Stone, she felt herself becoming slower and heavier. Her last thoughts were of Mistress Gneehigh at the Institute, "She would have been so proud; She always told us girls to be good as gold."

>**RAM RESTORE**

OK. Ingrid was in Seamus Sosmall's shop, surrounded by all kinds of peculiar objects. Ingrid could see a flying pig, a three dollar bill, a postcard of cute little ice-skating demons, a tax refund, the Philosopher's Stone and an axe.

>**TAKE AXE**

Ingrid took the axe.

>**GO TO THORNS** [letting the computer work out the route. Press any key to abandon this type of "high level" command.]

Ingrid went outside and was in a scrubby field on the edge of a great forest. She could see a signpost.

Flopsy jumped up to greet her.

Ingrid went west and was below the eaves of darkwood, in the middle of a bramble hedge. Ingrid could see a multitude of thorns.
Flopsy entered from the east and ate a blackberry.

> **LIE ON THE GROUND**

Ingrid lay down and considered the problem.

> **CUT THORNS**

Ingrid gave the thorns a thorough pruning with the axe. After all, she had studied gardening for two years at the Institute.
Flopsy looked at the splintered greenery and barked approvingly.

> **WEST**

Ingrid stepped over the remains of the thorns and was in a woodland clearing. She could see a dog cart. In fact, the cart looked just like the one from Gnettlefield farm.
Flopsy entered from the east.

> **GET IN** [to use vehicles, get in and move as normal]

Ingrid seated herself in the dog cart. Seeing this, Flopsy positioned herself between the shafts at the front of the cart, ready to pull it. From her higher vantage point, Ingrid caught sight of the smoke from the chimney of a small cottage, far to the gnortheast.

> **NE**

The cart drove gnortheast and was on a paved driveway. The sound of angry voices came from the cottage at the other end. The trolls were trying to evict Great Aunt Halfyard!



Hints

1. Draw a map (or a series of maps). Remember that the EXITS ON command lists all the paths from each location.

2. To make life easy for you, the objects that matter in a location are normally listed in a sentence like, "You can see a shopkeeper and a bunch of herbs". (Some other authors hide useful objects amidst the background scenery, but Level 9 avoid this). The rest of your surroundings are probably scenery, but by all means try to do things to them if you like.

3. Examine all the objects that you see and, as a rule, take everything that you can. Most objects are useful in some way.

4. Use the "high level" commands, such as GO TO WINDMILL, RUN TO BRIDGE, FOLLOW STEAMROLLER, WAIT 5, WAIT FOR FLOPSY, which take the place of many individual instructions. Remember that pressing a key "breaks" out of such commands.

5. Some puzzles can only be solved with cooperation from other people (especially in later parts of the game), so get used to giving orders. You can cancel orders given in error by e.g, FLOPSY, STOP

6. Get used to using "UNDO". If you make a mistake and get "killed" or lose a vital object, the UNDO command is available on most micros and takes you back in time - to before your previous move. On larger micros, you can use UNDO many times in succession to retrace your steps a long way through the game.

7. SAVE your place occasionally, so that if you notice a mistake too late to be able to UNDO it, or if the electricity flickers and your computer crashes, you can RESTORE the saved position and continue from there. SAVE puts your position on tape or disc (see the details instructions) and RESTORE can retrieve it later. RAM SAVE is quicker but less secure, as it saves the position in memory.

8. Try everything you can think of - even weird or dangerous actions sometimes provide clues, and might be fun. You can use UNDO (or RESTORE if you have previously used SAVE) to recover if the results are "fatal".

9. You can word a command in many different ways. For example, if there were an axe and a ball on the ground, you could take the axe by typing any of the following:
   > GET THE AXE
   > TAKE AXE
   > GET ALL BUT THE BALL
   > LOOK AT THE AXE AND TAKE IT
   If the game doesn't understand your command, try rephrasing it and using synonyms. If the game still doesn't understand, you are probably trying something that is not important in the game.

10. If you are really stuck, you can get a free hint sheet, with hundreds of clues, from Level 9 at PO Box 39, Weston-super-Mare, Avon BS24 9UR, England. You must enclose the "clue card" from the packaging and provide a large, stamped, self-addressed envelope (UK users), or four International reply coupons (overseas users).

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OFFICIAL SECRETS

Let's face it, at some stage in this game you're going to need help.

A good move, before you start, is to send us a stamped addressed envelope. Then you'll receive a full set of clues before you need them, or at least before you get desperate for them. But the clues aren't the only thing we'll send you:

We'll tell you all about **OFFICIAL SECRETS.** That's the club for people who want more. More than what? You might ask. But we can't tell you too much because we don't want to give the game away...... yet.

Send a large Stamped Addressed Envelope or an International Response Coupon to:

Ingrid
Official Secrets
P.O. Box 847
Harlow CM21 9PH

And in the corner of your envelope please mark which type of computer you have.

Loading instructions for Ingrid's Back

This section tells you how to run "Ingrid's Back" on your computer, and lists the specific features of each version. Should you experience any loading problems, return the cassettes or disc, without the packaging, to Level 9 Computing at PO Box 39, Weston-super-Mare, Avon BS24 9UR.

Disc loading instructions

Look down the alphabetical list of computer types and follow the instructions for your computer. The underlined text is what you type, and remember to press the ENTER or RETURN key after each command.

Amiga 500	Insert the game disc and turn on your Amiga.
Amiga 1000/2000	Insert your Kickstart disc and turn on your Amiga. When it asks for Workbench, insert the game disc.
Amstrad CPC 6128	Turn on your CPC (6128 or 464/664 expanded to 128K) and insert the game disc. Enter RUN"MENU"
Amstrad PCW	Insert your usual CP/M+ disc and turn on your PCW. Insert the game disc and enter MENU
Apple II	Insert the game disc and turn on your Apple II.
Atari ST	Insert the game disc and turn on your ST.
Atari XE or 800XL	Remove any cartridges. Insert the game disc. While holding down OPTION for at least 5 seconds, turn the Atari on. If nothing happens, turn off the Atari for 30 seconds and try again.
BBC master or 48K+	Turn on your BBC micro, insert the game disc and press SHIFT and BREAK together. If this doesn't work, press CONTROL SHIFT D and BREAK together.
CBM 64 or 128 disc	Turn on your Commodore (while holding down the Commodore key, if you have a 128). Insert the game disc and enter LOAD"*",8,1

IBM PC and clones	Insert the normal operating system disc and turn on your IBM PC. Insert the game disc and enter <u>MENU</u>
Mac,Mac+	Insert the normal operating system disc and turn on your Mac. Insert the game disc and double click on the MENU icon.
Spectrum +3	Turn on the Spectrum, insert the game disc and press ENTER.



Tape loading instructions

Put one of the game tapes in your recorder, look down the alphabetical list of computer types and follow the instructions for your computer. The underlined text is what you type, and remember to press the ENTER or RETURN key after each command. If the tape doesn't move, press ENTER or RETURN again.

Amstrad CPC tape Turn on your CPC. If it has a disc drive, enter |TAPE Type RUN"" start the tape on play and press SPACE.

Atari XE,800XL Remove any cartridges. While holding down START and OPTION for at least 5 seconds, turn on the Atari. Start the tape on play and press RETURN. If nothing happens, turn off the Atari for 30 seconds and try again.

CBM 64 or 128 tape Turn on your Commodore (while holding down the Commodore key if you have a 128). Press SHIFT and RUN/STOP together and start the tape.

MSX 64K Turn on your MSX, enter RUN"CAS:" and play the tape.

Spectrum 48K Turn on the Spectrum, type LOAD"" and play the tape.

Spectrum 128/+2 Turn on the Spectrum, press ENTER and play the tape.

Save on disc

To save game positions from the disc version of Ingrid's Back, you first need a blank disc of your own.
Before playing Ingrid's Back, format (initialize) this disc, using the ordinary software bought with your micro. (Exceptions to this are Apple II and Atari XE,800XL discs - Ingrid's Back uses its own disc format on these computers and will initialize the disc itself.)
When playing the game, enter SAVE and follow the instructions displayed.

To return to a SAVEd position, enter RESTORE and YES, and follow any instructions asking for one word from the story. When entering a file name, you can either type a short word such as POS1, or use the full format permitted by your particular computer.

Save on tape

To save game positions from a cassette version of Ingrid's Back, you need a blank cassette of your own.
When playing the game, start a blank tape on RECORD and enter SAVE (if the cassette doesn't move, press ENTER or RETURN again). When the game starts running again, e.g to prompt "What gnow?", stop the tape.
To return to a SAVEd position, enter RESTORE and YES, then follow any instructions asking for one word from the story. Finally, rewind the tape on which the position was saved, and play it (if the cassette doesn't move, press ENTER or RETURN again).

Save in memory

To save your game position in memory (all but 48K Spectrums, 64K Amstrad CPCs and small BBCs allow this), enter RAM SAVE
To return to a SAVEd position, enter RAM RESTORE
Saving in memory is quick and convenient - it is an ideal way of saving your position before trying something risky - but a RAM SAVEd position will be lost if your computer is turned off or crashes, so SAVE to disc or tape occasionally.
Note also that the UNDO command is available on all versions which have RAM SAVE. UNDO takes you "back in time" to before Ingrid last moved: it's a bit like RAM RESTORE where the corresponding RAM SAVEs are automatic. UNDO can be used many times in succession on larger micros.

Additional features

The versions of Level 9 adventures on large micros often have more facilities than those on smaller machines. Here is a summary of the features available with Ingrid's Back...

<u>AMIGA FEATURES</u>

* colour pictures (use the mouse, with its left button pressed, to slide the picture up and down);
* picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads);
* recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and BACK SPACE;
* RAM SAVE/RESTORE and UNDO;
* README file. For more information, boot the Amiga with Workbench, then insert the game disc and double click on its icon and README.TXT

<u>AMSTRAD CPC DISC FEATURES</u>

* colour pictures (use F8 and F2 to slide the picture up and down). To see more pictures, wait until the game has loaded and is waiting for you to type something - then flip the disc over;
* picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads);
* recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and DELETE;
* RAM SAVE/RESTORE and UNDO;
* the Amstrad CPC disc also works on Amstrad PCW and Spectrum +3;
* README file. For more information, turn on the CPC, insert the game disc and enter <u>LOAD"README"</u> and <u>LIST</u>

<u>AMSTRAD PCW DISC FEATURES</u>

* black-and-white pictures. To see more pictures, wait until the game has loaded and is waiting for you to type something - then flip the disc over;
* picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads);
* recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and DELETE;
* RAM SAVE/RESTORE and UNDO;

* the Amstrad PCW disc also works on Amstrad CPC and Spectrum +3;
* README file. For more information, boot the PCW with CP/M+ as usual, then insert the game disc and enter TYPE README.TXT

ATARI ST FEATURES
* pictures on colour and black-and-white displays (use the mouse, with its left button pressed, to slide the picture up and down);
* picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads);
* recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and Backspace;
* RAM SAVE/RESTORE and UNDO (several times in succession);
* variable text size (experiment by pressing F1 or F2, then typing ;
* Demonstration Game. If you would like a continuous demonstration of Ingrid's Back, perhaps for use in a shop, start the game and WAIT UNTIL THE FIRST PICTURE HAS FINISHED LOADING and the game is waiting for a command. If necessary, press SPACE a couple of times so the game can print the rest of its start-up message and reach the first prompt, ">" or "What now?". Only then should you press Alternate R
* README file. For more information, start the ST with a disc which does not auto-boot (e.g a blank disc). Then insert the game disc and double click on its icon and README.TXT.

BBC DISC FEATURES
* colour pictures on BBC Masters, B+ with additional sideways RAM, or BBC B with both shadow and sideways RAM. (Smaller BBC show a mode 7 text-only display, e.g BBC B with just sideways or shadow RAM). On BBC Masters you can use the cursor keys, with SHIFT pressed, to slide the picture up and down. To see more pictures, wait until the game has loaded and is waiting for you to type something - then flip the disc over;
* recall and editing of previous commands, on BBCs big enough to show pictures, by cursor keys, DELETE and COPY ("forward delete");
* variable text size, on BBCs big enough to show pictures; press f0 and f1 to select between 40 and 80 column text;
* RAM SAVE/RESTORE and UNDO on big BBCs;
* picture cache on very big BBCs (avoiding unnecessary disc loads);

* README file. For more information, turn on the BBC, insert the game disc and enter *TYPE "README"

COMMODORE 64/128 DISC FEATURES

* colour pictures (use the cursor keys to slide the picture up and down). To see more pictures, wait until the game has loaded and is waiting for you to type something - then flip the disc over;
* RAM SAVE/RESTORE and UNDO;
* fast performance when the pictures are turned off; partly because loading from disc takes a little while (even though we use a good turbo) and partly because not needing to maintain a moveable split screen (between the picture and text) frees more processing power.

IBM PC FEATURES

* pictures in MGA and EGA modes. (The disc just contains one set of pictures and converts them on output when MGA is chosen);
* picture cache (avoiding unnecessary disc loads);
* recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and Backspace;
* RAM SAVE/RESTORE and UNDO (on machines with more than 128K);
* demonstration Game. If you would like a continuous demonstration of Ingrid's Back, perhaps for use in a shop, start the game by entering MENU and waiting for it to load. Then, before doing anything else, press ALT R. Continue by choosing a display format as usual;
* README file. For more information, boot the PC from its normal operating system disc, then insert the game disc and enter TYPE README.TXT

MAC FEATURES

* pictures (use the mouse, button pressed, to slide the picture up and down);
* recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys and Backspace;
* RAM SAVE/RESTORE and UNDO (several times in succession).

SPECTRUM +3 DISC FEATURES

* black and white pictures, tailored for tv display (use the cursor keys to slide the picture up and down). To see more pictures, wait until the game has loaded and is waiting for you to type something - then flip the disc over;
* recall and editing of previous commands, by cursor keys with SYMB SHIFT pressed, and DELETE;
* RAM SAVE/RESTORE and UNDO (several times in succession);
* the Spectrum +3 disc also works on Amstrad CPC and PCWs;
* README file. For more information, turn on the Spectrum +3, insert the game disc, select +3 BASIC and enter LOAD "READ.ME"



THE SECOND GNETTLEFIELD JOURNAL

Airsday 16th Gnovigour

Well, it is gnice to be back in my own room at Gnettlefield Farm, writing my diary again.

I got home from my little holiday (see Gnome Ranger) just in time for lunch. My family were sitting around the table, watching the soup cool, and were they surprised when I popped my head round the kitchen door to shout, "Coo-ee! It's me!"

Gnognome moved or said anything for about a second, then Mother, who had been passing the loaf to Dimple, shrieked and dropped it. The loaf smashed the soup tureen and warm soup gushed out into poor Bumpy's lap. He jumped up, tipping over the bench that he and Dimple and Gnoggin were sitting on, and they all landed up in the hearth. Meanwhile, the loaf - one of Mother's thick round ones - rolled the length of the table and fell on Father's foot with a scrunch.

Flopsy, my favourite dog, leapt out of the chair she had been sitting in and bounded up to me. And then I saw Arback Garden, our faithful farm-hand. Flopsy had been sitting on him, and her leap had sort of pushed him through the seat of his chair. Anyway, he brushed the dog hairs off his face and gave me a sort of squashed smile.

Later, when Mother had bandaged Father's foot, and Dimple had gone and dried himself, and my other brothers had decided they'd been lying in the hearth long enough, and Arback had scooped the soup back into the pot, we all sat around the table. I told them about my adventures, and said I didn't know what I'd done to deserve such a super holiday and I hoped it hadn't cost too much.

Father was a bit grumpy and said, "Considering what I paid for that there teleport scroll, three months weren't very long."

"Gnonsense, Father," I told him. "It was more than long enough, especially as there is so much for me to do here."

But Father wasn't to be pacified and muttered, "I'll have words with that Seamus Sosmall, gnext time he comes peddling his wares at Gnettlefield."

Gnow, while I've been away, I've had lots of time to think about the improvements I want to make to the farm. I was just starting to tell them some of my ideas, when Mother said, "It's about time for Flopsy's run."

Well, when Flopsy heard this, she bounced up and got a saddle down from the wall and started to strap it on. I looked a bit surprised, but Arback said, "Flopsy usually takes me for a ride after lunch. Perhaps you'd like to go instead."

Riding Flopsy! Really, my family are so lazy! I took her for a gnice long walk, and we had a good look around the farm.

The bantam coop is still in one piece, and there are dozens of bantams everywhere. The guinea pig sty and the barn have been rebuilt, but there's gno sign of the mill. Just a pile of rubble where it used to be. I haven't seen Uncle Dusty Halfyard either, so I must find out what's happened to him tomorrow. I can't ask anygnome gnow because, by the time I got back with Flopsy, my family had all gone to bed and have stayed there ever since.

I didn't go straight to bed, partly because I wanted to write my diary, and partly because I couldn't find my bed. Eventually I dug it out from under a pile of turnips that they had stored in my room. I've stacked them gneatly outside, ready to take downstairs in the morning.

Fireday 17th Gnovigour

Oh my Father is so clumsy! He got up in the middle of the gnight and went downstairs for a snack. Well, that is what he was going to do, but he tripped on the turnips at the top of the stairs, and fell down. Then all the turnips rolled down on top of him. It must have made a tremendous gnoise. I'm surprised gnognome was woken up.

Anyway, the turnips were still there this morning, blocking the way to the kitchen. It was gnearly ten o'clock before we had cleared a passage over the top so that we could go and get our breakfast, and afternoon before Father managed to struggle out from under the rest.

I've solved the mystery of the missing windmill.. Uncle Dusty has had a gnew one built on his own bit of land, the other side of Sandybottom field. I went round to see him after breakfast. Uncle Dusty is a hopeless businessman, and I can see that I shall have to take charge at his mill or it will be a complete failure.

For a start, the mill is so unwelcoming. There's a gate at the end of his lane with a big "Gno entry" sign on. (Actually, it doesn't say "Gno Entry". He's tried to use that fancy word "ingress" instead, but he can't spell. So the sign reads "Halfyard's Gnew Mill. Gno Ingrids").

Then, the mill's in completely the wrong place. It's at the bottom of a sheltered valley, surrounded by trees, and the sails were hardly turning. Yet the wind was so strong in Sandybottom field, that the rabbits were having to hold their ears down to stop themselves being blown away.

And, when I got there, I couldn't get in through the door because he was piling up sacks of corn against it from the inside - I could see them through the keyhole. And he seems to be going deaf because I couldn't make him hear me. It's very bad for business. Supposing I'd been a customer?

Stoneday 18th Gnovigour

While I was dusting the mantelshelf this morning - I'm sure gnognome has done any cleaning since I left - I found a dozens of letters from estate agents. All of them have clients who want to buy the farm, but they are wasting their time as we don't own it. My parents rent it on a long lease instead, from the squire of Ridley's manor.

Next I found a black edged card. It had really fancy writing on it, the sort that's all loops and squiggles. I managed to make out "Invitation..", then decided it would be quicker to ask Mother.

"They buried the old squire last month. That were for his funeral."

"Oh, is he dead then?" I asked, without thinking.

"I expect so," Mother replied. "I gnever asked him. They buried him anyway." Then Mother picked up all the odds and ends that I'd put to one side, ready to throw away, and carefully re-arranged them back on the mantelpiece. So I left the tidying up till market day, when Mother will be out of the house, and decided to visit the manor house at Ridley's End. Cousin Daisy works there as a maid, so she would be sure to know all about the gnew squire.

But I only got as far as Little Moaning village, where I found I couldn't cross the River Dribble. I mean, really! It's years since the middle of the bridge collapsed under the weight of Jumbo Butterpat, and they still haven't got round to rebuilding it. Even though it's on the main road from Little Hampton to Gnomebridge! The only way to get over is by ferry, but Boney Spratt is the fishergnome as well as the ferrygnome. As today was a fishing day, gnot a ferry day, that was it!

Mudday 19th Gnovigour

I tried to call in on Uncle Dusty again, but the Mill Yard is full of vicious chickens. As soon as I approached the gate they all came rushing up clucking angrily, so I backed off. I was worried about Uncle Dusty's safety, but Mother says that he's all right. In fact, he's got the chickens to protect himself from intruders.

I've just discovered why Grandma Gnutson isn't around. She has gone to look after the Dribblemouth Light, while Millie Watts, the lighthouse keeper, is visiting her sister in Gnomebridge. Must go over and see her sometime soon.

Treesday 20th Gnovigour

I cornered Father after breakfast and told him of my plan to drain Soggybottom Field so that we can grow something useful in it (it's mostly under water as usual). I studied irrigation at the Institute of Gnome Economics and all we've got to do - well, all him and my brothers have got to do, and they're gnot doing much at the moment - is dig a couple of drainage ditches acros to join up with the River Dribble where it runs along the side of the field..

Father said it was too wet for digging.

Woodenday 21st Gnovigour

I set out for Ridley's End again this morning, but it was another fishing day, so I was stuck this side of the Dribble. As I was coming back past the forge, I heard some banging and went to investigate.

Gnat Tackhammer, the blacksmith, was hammering away at a peculiar little cart - it seems he has invented a dogless carriage!

He'd got the headlamps and the shape of the sunroof sorted out quite gnicely, but was having trouble with the what-makes-it-go bit. He'd cobbled together some fancy arrangement of things he called pedals and chains, but I said to him, "Really, Mr. Tackhammer, if people are going to use their feet to go places, they might as well walk!"

That made him think a bit, so he said, "All right, Miss Cleverclogs, what do you suggest?"

I studied engineering at the Institute, so the answer was obvious really; Wind-power. Just like on boats. Gnat went in then for his lunch, so I set to and got the job done to surprise him. I used a sheet, that Mrs. Tackhammer had hung out to dry, to rig up a sail and took the pedally things off his carriage. The carriage still wouldn't move, but I gnoticed some little blocks that had jammed on the wheels and stopped them turning. I'd just finished removing them by the time Gnat came back.

"What do you think of the carriage, then?" I asked him. He didn't know what to say so I said, "Come on, we'll give it a trial run," and pushed it out of the forge.

There was a gnice breeze blowing up Ploughgnomes Lane towards Greater Cawing, and the sail filled a treat. Mr. Tackhammer and I climbed on board before it blew away, and soon we were bowling along the road ever so fast. But unfortunately, the wind died down when we got to the trees gnear Dusty's mill, and our dogless carriage stopped.

I wanted to push it for a bit until we found some more wind, but Gnat had had enough and wanted to go back. Then we realized that the wind would be in the wrong direction. Mr. Tackhammer was going to complain, until I pointed out that it was all downhill to the Forge, so there was gno problem.

It was a bit unfortunate what happened gnext. I'd got out of the carriage to turn it round and was pushing it to get it going, when Mrs. Downtrodden arrived to see what was going on. I let go of the carriage to talk to her, and while she was moaning about it "Gnot being gnatural. Gno dogs gnor gnothing.." the carriage rolled off without me.

It really picked up speed down the hill, and I am sure that if I'd been driving all would have been well. But Gnat Tackhammer kept shouting about sabotage to the brakes, and trying to slow it with his feet, so when the carriage reached the bridge it didn't have enough speed to jump the gap. Fortunately though, it wasn't damaged as its fall was broken by Boney Spratt's fishing boat in mid-stream.

The carriage floated very gnicely and was washed back to shore gnear the end of the Spit.

I met Gnat and Boney later, walking soggily back up the lane to the forge. "That wasn't too bad for a trial run, was it?" I said encouragingly. "Shall we be working on our dogless carriage again tomorrow?"

"Gno," Said Gnat. "I'm going to be designing an Ingridless carriage." And Boney wrang out his beard all over my sandals.

Airsday 22nd Gnovigour

I didn't get across to the Manor today either! Boney Spratt has mended his boat all right, but it was another fishing day! I thought this was all getting a bit ridiculous - I don't think there's been a ferry day since I got back - so I went down to Ferry Cottage to see what was going on. Boney wasn't there, of course (I could see him fishing on the Dribble), but his wife was.

"Why isn't there a ferry today?" I asked Mrs. Spratt.

"Gnow don't you come that tone of voice with me, young miss," screeched Mrs. Spratt, "and don't you go interrupting your elders and betters."

It was then that I gnoticed Mrs. Butterpat, though really, it's hard gnot to gnotice her. She is every bit as big as Jumbo. She was buying fish - a whole basketful. I waited until they had finished their conversation, and she was about to leave, before I tried again.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Spratt," I said, ever so politely, "but could you tell me when there will be a ferry across the Dribble."

"Well, I wouldn't like to say," she said. "My Boney is so busy catching fish for the tables at the Green Gnome that he don't have time for gno ferrying."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Butterpat," I asked, "but could you tell me why the Green Gnome is so very busy all the time gnowadays?"

"It's all them travellers waiting for the ferry," she replied.

Fireday 23rd Gnovigour

I made it to Ridley's End at last! Mind you, I had to hike all the way up to Greater Cawing, then down the lane that leads to the footbridge over the Upper Dribble and the ford across the Trickle. Then it was cross country up over Three Mole Hill - I saw somegnome over by the third molehill, and gave them a wave, but didn't have time to stop. Must go and visit sometime, as it looks quite lonely out there.

I found Cousin Daisy in the kitchen garden helping Armillaria Budblast, the gardener, to watch the parsley grow. They told me all the gnews. It seems that old Squire Gillpot died last month. Died in his cups, she said. Well, in a cup. Someone sent him a huge loving cup for his birthday, and he fell in and drowned when it was still half full of beer.

Anyway, the gnew squire is a distant cousin, Jasper Quickbuck. He still lives over in Gnomechester, and Daisy says he is an "indoors dealer" in the City, likes Guinness and made a fortune when BT was privatised.

Everyone was invited to the old Squire's funeral. Daisy said it was "a right lovely do". They'd laid out tables in the Manor gardens, (they weren't having the villagers in the house, gnor in Ridley's back yard). There were sandwiches and little cakes, and beer. Armillaria Budblast didn't think that was very gnice though, especially when they drunk enough beer to lower the level and she found one of Squire Gillpot's boots at the bottom.

Squire Quickbuck didn't actually come to the funeral himself - in fact, he has hardly been gnear the place at all. (Daisy says he's probably too grand for the likes of us.) The Manor is being run by his accountant, Meacher, and his agent, a goblin in a flashy suit called Silas Crawley.

Stoneday 24th Gnovigour

I was going out to get some peat for the fire when Seamus Sosmall, the travelling leprechaun, called. He looked a bit gnervous, and hesitated on the doorstep when I invited him in.

"Is Mr. Bottomlow at home, at all, at all?" he asked.

"Gno, 'fraid gnot," I replied.

"Ah!" he said, looking a bit less fidgety, "Er.., did you enjoy your little trip, gnow?"

"It was marvellous!" I told him.

"To be sure!" he cried, with a huge grin. "Then I'll be coming in."

So he came in and I asked if he had got some yeast. He'd gnever heard of it, but when I told him what it was for, he said, "Just a minute, gnow. I've got the very thing." Then he rummaged in his bag and produced a packet marked "Super Lift-Off". He handed it to me, saying, "This'll do the trick to be sure."

He also sold me some Spade Shine, "sure to make a spade slip smoothly through the soggiest soil". It was just what I gneeded to get my father and brothers moving on those drainage ditches.

I was going to make some bread as soon as he left, but while we were talking the fire had gone out, and then Arback dropped the matches in the sink so we can't relight it. Arback has almost finished hanging out the matches on the washing line. I hope it doesn't rain.

Sandday 25th Gnovigour

It did rain. We had cold porridge for breakfast. Dimple thought it was great and could we always have it that way!

I wanted a cup of hot tea, so I decided to go down to the Dribblemouth Light to see Grandma Gnutson. She had the kettle on, as I thought she would. And she had a visitor. It was Isfrunt Garden, Arback's older brother.

"Gnow here's somegnome who'd be interested," he said to Grandma, holding a hand over his eyes to shield them from the light of the cageful of glow worms.

"Gno, Igngrid wouldgn't wagnt to ugnearth an agnciegnt Gnorse logngboat," said Grandma disparagingly.

I don't like being disparaged, and when I'd worked out what she'd said, I said, very distinctly, "Oh, yes I would!"

"In that case," said Isfrunt, "I'll tell you all about it." So he did.

He told me about an old Gnorse longboat buried under his vegetable garden over at Dunrollin in the Dunes. That's his cottage just up the Spit from the lighthouse. I could see it from the window. It looked ever so cosy snuggled down amid the sand. Anyway, he had found an old map with a shipwreck marked on it, realized it was gnear dunrollin and started digging. He had uncovered the prow - that's the bit at the front - when there was this awful storm and the whole lot has been covered up by sand.

"We cagn gnot let it remaign hiddegn, Igngrid," said Grandma, "We must prove that Gnorse gnomes lagnded ogn our gnative sagnd." She stopped and looked at me to see if I was getting carried away. I wasn't. She carried on. "Agnd thignk of the maggnificegnt thigngs we may fignd!"

That last bit convinced me. "Got a spade, Grandma?" I asked. She hadn't, but Isfrunt said I'd find one by his front door, and they would join me shortly.

Shortly! Ha! It was the middle of the afternoon before he and Grandma appeared. By then, I'd shifted a whole duneful of sand off his vegetable plot and dug the soil to the depth of two spades all over. I had found two old pennies - gnormal sort, gnot Gnorse - half a plate, three turnips and a cabbage stalk.

"Are you sure it was here?" I asked Isfrunt, resting on my spade.

"Aye," he replied, smiling at me to cheer me up (I must have looked very fed up), while he examined his gneatly dug vegetable garden. "Happen I be sure it were. Perhaps I'd better check my map."

"Perhaps I'd better," I suggested. I learnt my map reading at the Institute of Gnome Economics. I don't know where Isfrunt learnt his.

Unfortunately, Isfrunt didn't have the map at the house. He has lent it to Jumbo Butterpat, but will get it back gnext time he goes to the Green Gnome.

Mudday 26th Gnovigour

My back was a bit stiff today from all that digging, so I spent a quiet day trying to learn how to do that fancy writing like on the funeral invitation. Mind you, it wasn't just the lettering that was fancy. I managed to work out the small print at the bottom of the card. It said:

"Be it known that herein and hereby Jasper Quickbuck sole and rightful heir of Pewter Gillpot doth lay full Claim to the Title of Lord and to the Lands of Ridley's End and to the Entirety of the Dribble Valley and that whomsover shall gnot consenting thereto be desireth to make representation therefrom shall present their persons and legal testament at the offices of the Registrar of Lands and Titles in the City of Gnomechester forthwith and gnot later than seven days the receipt of this gnotice thereafter."

I wish I knew what it meant.

Treesday 27th Gnovigour

It was a lovely bright clear day today, so I hiked over to see the hermit at Three Mole Hill and spent a fascinating afternoon with her. She is called Mistress Thyme - I think her first gname is Rosemary, and she's a sage. She lives in the third mole hill. It's a bit cramped and dark and dirty, but I expect that's how all proper sages like their houses.

She doesn't speak much, but when she does say something, it is really meaningful. Like, "If the duck's bottom is muddy, how can the egg be clean?" And, "She that drinks deep of the waters of life must often go to the loo." That really made me think.

Woodensday 28th Gnovigour

I was down at the Green Gnome this morning, delivering some eggs - I found dozens all over the place in the barn. I don't think anybody had bothered to collect them since I went away.

I was just haggling over the price with Rollo Butterpat, when Creepy Crawley came in. He peered down his long gnose at the bottles and barrels behind the bar, then pointed to a cask marked "Scrumpy" and called to Jumbo Butterpat.

"I say, landlord," he cried, "a jug of your rustic wallop, hey! When in Gnome, do as the gnomes do, what?" He laughed, "Arf, arf." It sounded like a fox choking on a humbug.

Mr. Butterpat looked a bit surprised, then turned his back on the goblin and winked at Mrs. Butterpat as he poured a mug of raw scrumpy.

"I say, landlord, why do they call this little place the Green Gnome?" he asked.

Mr. Butterpat didn't answer, but smiled and asked, "How's the drink?"

Creepy Crawley took one swig of the scrumpy, then suddenly turned a funny green colour and rushed off outside.

"Hey lads, it works with goblins too!" Jumbo cried, roaring with laughter.

I couldn't see what was funny. "That's the stuff what Ma uses for getting stains off floor!" explained Rollo, when he had got over his giggles.

I still didn't see what was funny. In fact, I thought it was all a bit unkind, even though Creepy Crawley is a bit smug and condescending.

Airsday 29th Gnovigour

I was going to make some bread today with Seamus Sosmall's Super Lift Off, but Mother wouldn't let me as she was doing the washing and wanted to dry her socks in the oven.

So I got the spade shine out instead and polished all the spades. Then I took them to my father and brothers, who were all sitting in the root cellar, watching the mangel-wurzels to make sure that they didn't rot. I told them that, thanks to Seamus's spade shine, it didn't matter how soggy Soggybottom Field was, they could still dig the drainage ditches.

Father said he would have to "see that Seamus and show him how grateful we all are", and Dimple said, "but who's going to watch the mangel-wurzels?"

I told them to leave that to me, made sure that they knew what they were supposed to do, and sent them off.

It's been a good day for digging. Bright and clear with a gnice wind blowing down from the Gnorth to keep them cool. They must be having lots of fun because they're still out there.

Unfortunately, when I went out to close up the root cellar this evening, I found that three of the mangel-wurzels had rotted while gnognome was watching them.

Fireday 30th Gnovigour

Mother sent me off to find the rest of my family this morning as they hadn't appeared at breakfast.

Really! My father and brothers are hopeless! They had dug the drainage ditch in a loop that started and ended at the Dribble, so that the river flowed through Soggybottom with them stranded on an island in the middle.

The water wasn't that wide or deep, but it was too much for them to jump over without taking a run at it. Gnone of them can run without falling over, so we had to find another way to get them off. I said they should build a dam across the top end of the ditch and walk across that. They grumbled that they'd done enough digging and the spade shine had worn off and they didn't trust dams anyway, but they were all hungry so they had a go.

It was a bit of a slow job, as the Dribble was washing their dam away almost as quickly as they built it, and I think they would have still been there if it hadn't been for Bumpy. He tripped over his spade and fell into the ditch, blocking the water. We left Bumpy there until the real dam was finished, then when Father, Dimple and Gnoggin had walked over him, we all pulled him out and came home.

Stoneday 1st Deadembers

I headed down to Little Moaning today to see if Isfrunt Garden had got his map back yet, as I want to have another go at finding that Gnorse longboat. When I reached the top of Spit Lane, that leads down to Dunrollin in the Dunes, I met Gnat Tackhammer outside his forge. He was just pushing his dogless carriage out onto the road.

"I see you've put the pedally things back, Mr. Tackhammer," I said.

"Aye," he said.

"Are you taking it for another trial run?" I asked.

"Aye," he said.

"Would you like me to come along and give you a hand," I asked.

"Gnay," he said, and started to pedal towards Greater Cawing.

I wished he hadn't hurried away so, as I wanted to have a good look at the carriage. I'd got the impression that something was missing, but I couldn't say what it was.

Isfrunt wasn't at home, so I carried on to the end of Spit Lane to see if he was with Grandma Gnutson.

"Wognderful! Just whegn I gneed some assistagnce," she wheezed. "I've beegn rugngnigng up and dowgn these stairs all morgnigng, chagngigng the glow worms. You cogntignue with that and I'll make us a gnice refreshigng drignk."

So I spent the gnext hour carrying used glow worms down to the cellar and recharged ones back up to the top of the lighthouse.

Grandma Gnutson hadn't seen Isfrunt all morning, but she said, "It's gnearly gnoogn. Isfrugnt may be at the igngn."

Isfrunt was at the Green Gnome, eating a ploughgnome's lunch - that's raw turnip with the mud left on. He was telling me about how Jumbo Butterpat had used his map as a beer mat and it had dissolved, when there was this terrific clattering and shouting on the road outside. We all rushed to the door to see what was going on.

It was Gnat Tackhammer on his dogless carriage. He was careering down Ploughgnome's Lane at gninety leagues an hour, with his little legs whirling round like the sails on Uncle Dusty's old mill, the day that it fell down.

"Stop pedalling, Mr. Tackhammer!" I shouted to him.

"I can't!" he cried as he shot by.

"Put your brakes on, Gnat!" yelled Jumbo Butterpat after him.

Brakes! Of course! That was what the blocks were, that I removed from the dogless carriage. I should have realised after the first trial run.

This time, as he couldn't use his feet to slow him down, Gnat was going fast enough to jump clear across the Dribble. And he would have too, if Silas Crawley hadn't been standing in the middle of the road down by the bridge. As it was, the dogless carriage came to stop when it hit the goblin and sent him flying. Old Creepy got across the river anyway, and he didn't have to wait for the Spratt's ferry.

Sandday 2nd Deadembers

I went down to Soggybottom Field today to see if the dam is holding back the Dribble. It is, but enough water is leaking through that we may have to rename the place "Soggybottom Pond". I wonder if we should take up goldfish farming? I shall suggest that to Father when I gnext see him. (He and my brothers took to their beds when we came home on Fireday and have been there ever since.)

Mudday 3rd Deadembers

Today, I hiked round to Three Mole Hill to visit my favourite sage. On the way I met two dwarves! You don't see many of them around here. They were surveying. One of them had one of those tripod things and the other had a stripy pole.

"Hullo," I said, "what are you doing?"

"I'm gazing at t'stars and 'e's opening barber's shop," replied the one with the tripod in a rather surly voice.

That was silly, so I said, "Really, what are you surveying?"

He bent his head back to his instrument and grunted, "Mind thy own business, lass."

He was so rude! I turned and started to walk off, when the other one called, "Eh, lass. Be there anywhere we can get some grub? We ain't brought gnowt with us."

"There's the Green Gnome," I replied, pointing down to the village in the distance. "Make sure you try the scrumpy."

Mistress Thyme was on her doorstep, sitting every bit as still as Gnoggin does when he is fishing. The difference between them is that the sage sits and thinks, but Gnoggin just sits.

I sat myself down at her feet and said, "Tell me the meaning of life, oh sage." Which seemed a gnice respectful way to address her. She was silent for a very long time, then replied, "Life is a four-letter word". I thought about that very hard, then gave up and asked her if she could put it another way. She said, "You can put it any way you like". Then she went inside.

I passed those dwarves again on my way back. They had fallen into a ditch by the side of the road and were lying there, bright green and moaning softly.

Treesday 4th Deadembers

I am making some proper bread at last! Mother always finds some excuse to stop me, but today she has gone round to Uncle Dusty's mill with a bag of corn. As she is going to wait for him to grind it, she won't be back before dark.

I read the label on the Super Lift Off packet very carefully. It said lots about how marvellous it was, but gnothing about how to use it. So I put lots in to be on the safe side, made a gnice bubbly dough and put it in the oven to rise. I am sitting gnear it gnow, writing my diary while it rises. There are some interesting smells and gnoises coming from the oven. Fresh eggs would be lovely with hot gnew proper bread. I'll go and see if there are any.

Woodensday 5th Deadembers

Either Seamus Sosmall sold me the wrong stuff, or I used too much of it in the bread yesterday. While I was out at the bantam coop, the oven exploded. It blew the door right off and if Arback hadn't been there to catch it, that heavy iron door would have smashed the table. The gnoise brought my father and brothers out of their beds, which was a good thing, but they all got into a terrible mess when they came rushing into the kitchen. The dough was knee deep! It took ages to clear up, especially as Arback insisted on lying around moaning all the time.

I thought about having another go this morning, using a bit less Super Lift Off this time, but until somegnome fixes the oven door we won't be doing any more baking.

We haven't got any flour, anyway. Uncle Dusty's chickens surrounded Mother when she went over yesterday and stole her corn.

Airsday 6th Deadembers

Today I went through my old gnotebooks from the Institute of Gnome Economics, and found the work I did on Road Making and Bridge Building in the fifth year. I doesn't look too hard. With my skills and lots of willing hands, we could soon have a gnew bridge across the Dribble.

I spent the afternoon drawing up the plans for a suspender bridge. Tomorrow I will check out Greater Cawing Rookery - I think there are enough big trees there to do the job - and the day after I will recruit my labour force. By the weekend, we should be almost finished.

Fireday 7th Deadembers

I was in the middle of counting the trees at Greater Cawing, when one of the rooks flopped down beside me.

"'Ere," it cawed, "what you at, missus?"

I explained about my plans for a suspender bridge. The rook was most unhelpful.

"'Ang about," it cawed, "are you after chopping down our 'ouses so you can build this 'ere bridge."

"Well, you'll be using the gnew bridge, just the same as everybody else, won't you?" I said.

It cocked its head to one side and gave me a beady stare. "Like 'eck," it cawed. "You want a bridge, missus. You chop down your own 'ouse."

Then it flew off. I can see I may have a little problem there.

Stoneday 8th Deadembers

I went into the village today to organise a bridge-building team. I started with Boney Spratt, and managed to catch him just as he was about to go off fishing. I told him my plans and pointed out that when the bridge was built, he wouldn't have to do any more ferrying - which he doesn't seem to like - but could concentrate on his fishing.

"Gnow listen," says he, "if it weren't for the ferrying, there would hardly be gno fishing to do."

"But, Mr. Spratt," I argued, "you hardly ever do any ferrying!"

"Precisely!" he grinned, and went off with his gnets.

I could see that there were dozens of people in the Green Gnome, so I went there gnext and called out, "Will anyone join my bridge team?"

I got lots of volunteers, but when they discovered I meant build one, gnot play cards, they all went back to their beer. It seems the stranded travellers are all happy to stay where they are, scoffing Mrs. Butterpat's famous fish pies. (They are all businessgnomes, living on expenses and gnot in the least bit keen to get back to their offices.) There were a few willing villagers, but when Mrs. Butterpat wrote out a big gnotice saying "Gno Muddy Boots. Gno Bridge Builders", even they dropped out.

I was going to try Mistress Farthing, but I couldn't get in her shop as it was packed with stranded travellers buying sweets and souvenirs; and Gnat Tackhammer was too busy banging out the dents in his dogless carriage to even listen to me.

Sandday 9th Deadembers

I went right round to Ridley's End today, to see if I could get any help there. What a wasted walk! Daisy looked blank, as usual, though she did brighten up at the mention of suspenders. "I could do with some of they," she said. "My stockings get all wrinkly."

Armillaria Budblast started reminiscing about the old days, when Isfrunt Garden used to come over every evening to drink her mead.

"Well, won't you be pleased when the gnew bridge is built?" I asked.

"Gnot likely," he said. "I can drink it all myself as long as that old guzzler is stuck over there."

I even showed my plans to Creepy Crawley. "Very gnice, dearie," he said, patting my on the head. "Gnow run along home, there's a good little gnome." Ooh! I hate being patted on the head.

Mudday 10th Deadembers

Seamus Sosmall is my last hope on this bridge-building project. He travels all the time, and should be willing to help. Perhaps he will know a spell for getting volunteers. But he's gnot around gnow, as usual, and gnognome knows when he'll be back.

Treesday 11th Deadembers

Creepy Crawley called at the farm today to deliver an invitation to Father - he insisted on giving it to him personally, and even risked his gnice gnew suit to go into the barn to give it to Father. (There are so many bantams gnowadays that there isn't enough room for them in the coop, and lots are roosting on the rafters in the barn. They have gno consideration for anygnome walking past undergneath.)

There will be a Mid-Winter do at the village hall, on the 21st Deadembers, and we are all invited. Well, two do's in one year! That's more than old Squire Gillpot did for the village in all his years, so perhaps there is something to be said for the missing Quickbuck and his goblin agent after all. At least, we think it is a party. The goblin described it as a "gnight we would gnever forget."

Woodensday 12th Deadembers

Mother sent me off to Doomladen to borrow a cup of flour from Great Aunt Halfyard, and as she was in a hurry for it, she told me to take the short cut through Darkwood. Somegnome had thoughtfully put a gnotice up at the entrance to the wood, warning of the dangers of eating horrible wild berries. Mind you, they couldn't spell. The gnotice said, "Beware of the grizzly beres".

There was a rather gnasty old tramp in the woods, wearing a big scruffy fur coat. Mother has told me gnot to speak to strangers, so I tried to stay well away from him, but he kept pestering me. I heard him lumbering and grunting up the path behind me, so I walked faster to get ahead. Then he started to chase me, so I got ready and when he was really close, I jabbed back hard with my stick. That stopped him. He gave a sort of groan and fell over. I didn't look back, but hurried on to Doomladen.

Great Aunt Halfyard was walking around in her back garden with a Y-shaped twig in her hands. I asked her what she was doing.

"Dowsing," she said. "I done dropped a penny out here yestergnight, and this thingummyjig will find it for me."

She wandered around a bit more, until suddenly the twig began to twitch up and down. "See! Aha!" she cried, scrabbled at the ground and uprooted a potato.

"That's gnot a penny," I pointed out.

"Gnever you gno mind, my lass," she said. "It'll do for my lunch. Gnow let's find one for you."

She dowsed around some more until the twig-twitching set in again. She scrabbled at the soil and came up with a bone.

"I can't stop for lunch anyway," I told her. Then I had a brilliant idea. "Aunt Aggie," I asked, "could you find a buried boat with that twig?"

"Gnot if it were buried at sea," she said, "this thingummyjig does find water as well."

Well, I told her that the one I was after was in Isfrunt's garden. She looked a bit doubtful about that, but said that if it was there I'd find it. So I went home with a dowsing rod. But gno flour. Great Aunt Halfyard had run out of that, and until the chickens leave Uncle Dusty's mill, gnognome else is going to get any. Uncle Dusty is stranded in the Mill, living off eggs.

That old tramp was still prowling around in Darkwood, but he kept away from me this time.

Airsday 13th Deadembers

I did some dowsing at Dunrollin in the Dunes today. Arback came with me as he hadn't seen his brother in ages, so we took the cart. Flopsy enjoys pulling it, and if Arback had walked it would have taken till Stoneday to get there. Isfrunt was out beachcombing when we arrived. We could see him in the distance on the mud flats - the tide was right out.

Arback stood on the top of a dune and waved a dried seaweed frond at Isfrunt, until the wind caught it and blew him over. Then he just sat and waited for Isfrunt to come back.

I went all over the vegetable plot and found three turnips and a carrot, then I circled out from there. Just a few yards to the side, the hazel twig began to twitch like Flopsy's gnose at dinner time. I got my spade and started digging. Flopsy saw the fun and took off her harness so that she could come and help.

I went down through the sand until the hole was gnearly waist deep, then hit harder stuff. At that point, Flopsy took over and burrowed away like anything. Suddenly the ground gave way, and Flopsy disappeared into a deep hole. There was some sort of cave down there. I thought it was an ancient well, because I could hear a splashing of water, and I was ever so worried about how to get Flopsy out. But I gneed gnot have worried.

Five minutes later, Flopsy came bounding up from the beach carrying Isfrunt by the tunic. She dropped him down in front of Arback, then shook herself merrily and sat down on them both for a cuddle. Gosh she was wet! It seems that the hole leads out to the sea, and clever old Flopsy had found her way down there. And, of course, she knew that Arback wanted to see his brother so she brought him with her as she came back.

Fireday 14th Deadembers

Isfrunt has got his own private blow-hole. It's ever so pretty. I was down at Dunrollin at high tide this morning, and the sea was whooshing up through that hole I dug yesterday and sending a wonderful fountain of spray up into the air. When the sun shines, there is this lovely rainbow over Isfrunt's vegetable garden. He'll gnever have to worry about watering it in the summer!

Isfrunt wasn't looking very happy about it, but I expect that he's disappointed that I didn't find the longboat. I was going to do some more dowsing, but I found that I had come all that way without my hazel twig!

Instead, I decided to carry on and see Grandma Gnutson, and there she was, coming up from the Spit. Millie Watts, the lighthouse keeper, has returned from her sister's, and so Grandma can come back home again.

I'm afraid the strain of looking after the light has told on her. She was babbling on about a gnew Gnorse invasion.

"Igngrid," she said, "there were hugndreds of them, sailigng up the coast, armed to the teeth with spades and wheelbarrows. The igngvaders lagnded ogn the other side of the Dribble agnd have camped ign the dugnes below Ridley's Egnd."

I could see the Manor dunes from where we stood, but they were quite empty. "I can't see anygnome, Grandma," I said.

"Ah, they're too cugngnigng to be seegn! But they're there." she cried.

"There, there, yourself, Grandma," I said. "Gnorsegnomes don't bother me."

"They will," she wailed. "We'll all be murdered ign our sleep!"

"But they won't murder you," I told her. "After all, you are Gnorse as well, aren't you."

"Agnd how will they kgnow that if I'm asleep?" she asked.

"Leave them a message," I said shortly. Really, Grandma's obsession with Gnorsegnomes was getting a bit wearing.

Anyway, that is why Grandma Gnutson gnow sleeps with a gnotice tied round her gneck. It says, "I'm a Gnorse gragngny." And she has been practising snoring in Gnorse, just for good measure.

Stoneday 15th Deadembers

I was over at Three Mole Hill today. The sage was having lunch when I got there - raw lentils and water! I said that it didn't look very tasty, and told her all about my favourite foods - dumplings, sticky buns, chocolate cake and big fat sausages.

"A gnome is what she eats," she said, chewing a dried pea. I wonder if I should change my diet?

Sandday 16th Deadembers

Bacon and eggs and fried suet pudding for breakfast! Gosh I gneeded that. I had raw lentils for tea and for supper yesterday and could hardly sleep for hunger. I don't know how Rosemary manages! Perhaps you have to reach that stage a bit at a time. I shall start by giving up heavy things - like Mother's bread.

Mudday 17th Deadembers

I'd gone down to Mistress Farthing's shop today, delivering eggs, and I gnoticed Seamus Sosmall on the far side of the Dribble. Mr. Spratt was fishing, as usual, so I couldn't gnip across to talk to him, but I stood at the water's edge and shouted at Seamus. He couldn't seem to hear what I was saying, so I waved at him to stay there, then set off to hike round to join him.

It's ever such a long way from Little Moaning up to Greater Cawing, over the footbridge and back down across Three Mole Hill. I was whacked out by the time I reached the other side of the

Dribble. And I couldn't see Seamus Sosmall anywhere! Then I heard a little voice, carried across on the wind - and there was Seamus on the other side!

I couldn't believe it. How could I have missed him on the way round? I'd just turned about to start the slog back when there was a sort of whooshing gnoise and the leprechaun was standing gnext to me.

"Sure and don't disappear again, young gnome maid," he said. "There I was, over here, and yourself over there and me coming over to join you only I couldn't find me transporting stuff at all, at all. And when I did, begorra, you'd gone! Gnow here I am and here are you, and what was it you were wanting, to be sure?"

So I told him my plans for a gnew bridge, but he just shook his head with a sad smile. "Sure and I'd like to help you," he said, "but you see, it's like this. With that there bridge gnot being here, a travelling salesgnome like myself does very gnicely buying things in Gnomebridge and selling them to those that can't get across to the town themselves. Gnow what would a bridge do for my business?"

I could see his point. Then I had a brilliant idea. "We could make it a toll bridge."

"Begorra! That we could," he replied, with a glitter in his eye. "We'll do it tomorrow! Gnow, would you like a lift home?" He reached for his transporting stuff, but I said I could do with a walk. (Actually, my feet were killing me, but I wanted to get home safely.)

Treesday 18th Deadembers

Seamus Sosmall's bridge was almost a success. I was a bit late getting down to the Dribble, as it had taken me a while to collect all my maps, plans and work schedules together. Anyway, when I got there, he had finished it already.

"Coo, that was quick, Mr. Sosmall!" I said. "Is it safe?"

"Sure and begorra! Gnow there's a thing to ask! Just you watch me gnow." He stomped off to the middle of the bridge and jumped up and down like anything. The bridge didn't even wobble. That surprised me, because it didn't look that strong. It was straight and flat, but very thin like a sheet, and it didn't have any suspenders. I wanted to put some on, but Seamus was keen to get some customers and marched off to the Green Gnome before I could stop him.

The stranded travellers were still having their breakfast - fried fish! - and didn't really want to know about crossing the Dribble, but Seamus eventually got them moving.

Seamus collected their tolls (I'm sure I heard him mutter "Well that's paid for the starch"), and sent them off all together. Unfortunately, there was a sudden shower when they were about half

way across. The bridge softened in the rain and collapsed into the Dribble. It was just as well that Boney Spratt was fishing just down river. He caught the travellers in his gnets and towed them over to the other side.

And do you know, while Boney Spratt was doing that, his wife came up and made us pay the ferrying fees! And that was more than we had charged in tolls.

I've gone off bridges.

Woodensday 19th Deadembers

It was pouring with rain today, and as I couldn't find anything else to do, I had a good look at the invitation to the Mid-Winter party. It was written in the same fancy lettering as the last - and there is more fancy writing in the small print on this one.

"Whereas under the provisions laid out in Section 97 Sub-Section 24a of the Land Registration Act Jasper Quickbuck has with due formality made claims to the land and the easements rights and privileges entailed therein of the Dribble Valley and in default of contrary representation thereto title to the aforesaid property has been granted to the above mentioned Jasper Quickbuck and gnoting that all prior claims to ownership are thereby extinguished the recipient of this missive is hereby given gnotice of termination of right of residency effective from 21st Deadembers gnext and that vacation of properties on that date shall be deemed to signify unqualified acceptance of this gnotification."

Phew! It took ages to copy that lot out. I think it means we've got to bring our own beer.

Airsday 20th Deadembers

I took myself over to see the sage this afternoon, to see if she could make head or tail of that invitation. She studied it very carefully, and eventually said, "If the writing is small, then so must be the quill."

"Yes, but what does it mean?" I said, getting a bit fed up with her gnomic utterances.

"Bring your own beer?" she suggested.

Hmm! She may be a sage, but she doesn't know her onions. And I think it was it was most rude of her to say she would gnever see me again, just because I laughed when I gnoticed that she was holding the invitation upside down.

I shall just have to wait until tomorrow to find out what the party is all about.

Fireday 21st Deadembers

Oh! That gnasty, mean, sneaky, rat! That city-slicker! That underhand, unprincipled land-grabber, Jasper Quickbuck! Him and his creepy goblin, Crawley! I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes.

There we all were, the Bottomlows, Halfyards, Gardens, Butterpats, Tackhammers, Spratts and Downtroddens; Grandma Gnutson, Millie Watts, and Mistress Farthing. All standing around in the village hall wondering whether we had come to the right place and where the food and drink had got to - it certainly hadn't come from the manor, gnor had the Butterpats been hired, and Cousin Daisy didn't know anything about outside caterers. Then the doors swung open and in walked Crawley, grinning all over his evil face.

"Well I am glad you all came," he smirked.

"I wouldn't call this a party!" shouted Isfrunt Garden from the back.

"Gnor would I," agreed Arback Garden from the front.

"I gnever said it would be," retorted Crawley. "If you have read your gnotices properly, you will know perfectly well what this is. By coming here you have vacated your properties, and by vacating your properties on this day, you have agreed to the eviction gnotices that I served on you last week."

There was pandemonium. I think that's the word. Certainly, Mrs. Butterpat had her pan out and was about to go at him like a demon when she gnoticed that the goblin had company. Two whacking great trolls had squeezed themselves in through the double doors and stood slouching against the roof. At a sign from Crawley they bellowed "QUIET!" so loudly that Mistress Farthing was blown over by the blast.

"It's your own fault," the goblin went on. "You should have registered your land claims when you had the chance. Squire Quickbuck gave you due gnotice of that too. But it's too late gnow. You will have to leave. The Dribble Valley is going to be turned into a Yuppie Homes development, featuring a Gnorsegnome-style yacht marina."

Gnorsegnomes! I turned to Grandma Gnutson. Was she involved?

"Don't look at me like that," she said, without a trace of an accent, "I've just changed my gname back to Bottomlow."

Well, so that's where we are gnow. Creepy Crawley and his trolls have gone, Arback and Isfrunt are still looking for the beer, everybody else has gone to the Green Gnome to think what to do, or whether to do anything at all, and I'm writing up my diary because I have a feeling there's gnot going to be much time for that in the gnext few days.

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